General Miscellany.

THE RUINED MILL.

I sat upon the broken wall and cast the line and hook
Below, within the waters of the half-obstructed brook;
And looked about, in moody thought, the dwindled surface o'er,
Where spread a lakelet's broad expanse, and deep, in days of yore.

Behind me leaned the ruined mill in downhill of decay;
Its timbers bare, and gaping sides half-opened to the day;
Its leaky flume and useless wheel all green with stagnant slime,
The water gurgling underneath with melancholy chime.

A phebe fearless built her nest within a leaning brace,
The solitary cheerful thing about the cheerless place;
And even she appeared to feel—or 'twas my somber mood,—
That poets e'en may overpaint the charms of solitude.

I thought on Time's mutations and the changes I had seen
Since the landscape of life's morning to me was fresh and green;—
"The very fish are changed!" I cried, and drew a shiner out
Where once I took, with boyish pride, a thirty-two ounce trout.

Then here was business, here was stir,—the bustle and the whirl;
Here came the jolly yeomanry, here came the clownish churl;
Here idlers by the winter-fire, with checkers or with whist,
Quite willing waited while the stones were humming out the grist.

Here was the gossip and the wit of all the country side;
Here small official slates were made, and small officials tried;
With coming grain and going meal the frequent teams were seen;
Now, all approaches hitherward are sodded o'er with green.

Where are the men who hither brought the corn to make their bread?
I knew them when a little boy;—they're sleeping with the dead!
Like grain they're garnered up within some storehouse of the soul,
And of the miller long ago hath Death required toll.

So I thought on Time's mutations, of schemers and their schemes;
How very like, indeed, they are to dreamers and their dreams;
And when we contemplate the past, and when we dreams resume,
The self-same lamp that lights the one the other doth illume.

—*Springfield Republican.*

MISS MONTMORENCI.

BY MATTIE WINFIELD TORREY.

The Montmorenci place was a perfect wilderness of beauty run to waste. The house had not been lived in for years; the vines and shrubberies had grown into a tangle and snarl of greenery; the once orderly gardens were given over to weeds, and disorder and confusion reigned where once all had been trim and well kept.

Built long before the days of "shoddy," the house was a substantial structure, and seemed capable of defying the storms of coming centuries. The broad expanse of lawn in front sloped down to the waters of the Hudson, and here and there, through the mazes of intricate foliage, might be caught heavenly views of that much praised yet surpassingly beautiful river.

So there the old place lay, a perfect Indian jungle of profuse vegetation, with no eye to admire, or hand to subject into anything like order the wilderness which reigned around; indeed, the family had nearly died out; its male members were all gone; there was only a daughter left, and she was said to be eccentric, and a little fast—whatever horribly indefinite thing that may mean.

Miss Montmorenci had lived a good many years abroad, and, from having no will but her own to consult, had come to be quite independent, and fully competent to take care of herself. Her fortune being immense, she was abundantly able to indulge herself in any little expensive whims in which people of elegant tastes are permitted to luxuriate.

She was tall and stately, with such pride as became the last lineal representative of a noble house, in whose veins culminated the pure *sangre angle* of generations of aristocratic lineage. A fair blonde, with a complexion which no amount of either sun or wind could in the least impair; masses of silky blonde hair, clear gray eyes, and a mouth whose fullness many a man would have periled his soul's salvation to have kissed.

She had had lovers in plenty all her life, from the time she was a wee little sprite in short clothes, but at thirty Miss Montmorenci was still unwedded, and there was nothing for it except to conclude that she was hard of heart, and too much enamored of her own easy independence to be willing to run the risk of becoming entangled in matrimonial harness.

There had been a story years ago, current enough at the time, of a lover whose pride, at least, had equaled her own, though his worldly possessions were anything but large; but they had separated, and each had gone through the world thus far without coming again into contact, and events had drifted on, and the years between had come and gone, and the romance of long ago was as if it had never been.

Miss Montmorenci had an old duenna of a housekeeper, who matronized her at times, and, by way of making amends for the derelictions of her charge, was as severe in the dignity and unapproachableness of her virtue as her long years of spinsterhood might warrant.

It was early spring, and Miss Montmorenci's house on the Avenue was still the central point of attraction for a gay train of fashion worshipers. The lady herself was as cool and graciously unapproachable as ever, the gayeties of winter not having, to outward appearances, at all affected either her spirits or her temper, both of which were seemingly unruffled and placid.

It is morning; at least as near that season as people on the Avenue can be expected to arrive, and breakfast is upon the table. The duenna is seated on one side, severe in her usual toilet of black silk, with Miss Montmorenci, in a lovely white cashmere with blue facings, placed opposite. The room is furnished in blue moire, and there is a hint of the extravagant wealth of its mistress in all its appointments. The table service is of solid silver and the most delicate of china, and the light streams through damask, and filters through lace window draperies, ere it falls upon a single object within the room.

A pile of letters beside her plate attracts Miss Montmorenci's attention, and she languidly turns them over. They are of all shapes and sizes, from the tiny pink envelop, with its embossed monogram, to a huge business-like document.

Listlessly she glanced at each until the superscription of one of the largest and most business-like caught her eye, when she made haste to tear it open, and hurriedly, not to say eagerly, read its contents. Possessed of this knowledge, she placidly sipped her chocolate and buttered her roll. When she had quite settled the matter in her own mind, she imparted a little light to the duenna.

"You remember the old place up the river? I gave orders some time since to have it put in repair. My agent writes to tell me that the work is going on. We will go up there for the summer. It will be ready for our occupation."

The duenna opened her eyes aghast at this new freak.

"And Saratoga, and Newport, and Long Branch?"

"They are too old a story. The novelty wore off of them ages ago. I am sighing for 'fresh fields and pastures new,' and the only wonder is I did not think of it before. I shall invite a dozen or two of the people who are least obnoxious, and they can keep each other in countenance, and go on with their flirtations as well there as elsewhere. You may as well make out a list of articles which we shall need sent up; and, while you are about it, order the carriage, and I will go out to select the carpets."

No grass grew under Miss Montmorenci's feet, or rather under the feet of her well-matched carriage horses, until the furniture necessary for the complete setting out of her country-house was sent away under the supervision of half a dozen servants, headed by the duenna herself, who went *en avant* in order to prepare with all decorousness for the coming of her lady and her lady's guests.

From the deck of the steamer Miss Montmorenci gazed long and earnestly at so much of her mansion as was visible, listening with well-bred indifference to the flattering comments of her party. A short drive from the landing, over well-graveled roads, smooth, and winding, and well shaded, and the house came into full view, and there stood the duenna, in the full panoply of her lustreless black silk, and Miss Montmorenci was welcoming her guests to the home of her Dutch ancestors.

There were the two Misses Vainstart, with their brother Charlie and his *fiancee*, little Rose Summers. Pretty Mrs. Dunston, and her bear of a husband, who was as jealous as a Turk, and couldn't help showing it. Jenny Devine, who sang so like a seraph as to be known among her friends by the name of St. Cecelia. Will Masterson, who had set up for a wit, but had never yet reached the goal of his ambition, except in his own imagination. Cecil Thorpe, who, on the strength of a brigandish beard and a Veronese face, had fallen in love with art, and considered himself a veritable Titian. Besides these, half a dozen nonentities, with their respective wives or sweethearts, invited more for the purpose of filling up the gaps, than for any good they were capable of doing, either for themselves or others.

Miss Montmorenci never did things by halves, and the company collected beneath her roof was as well calculated to fuse and become one congenial whole, as any that could have been singled out from among the best New York society.

The appointments of the house were found to be perfect in all respects. The duenna had looked to that, and as she had *carte blanche* to order what she saw fit, there was no danger of failure in any department.

There was a French cook, with a small army of supernumeraries to reinforce him. There were most attentive maids and valets, whose sole ambition in life was to facilitate one's toilet, and turn one out a model of elegant attire.

The smooth lawns were just the very spot for croquet, and as rival clubs were soon formed, the game flourished, and was played with the scientific nicety it so well deserves, and so seldom receives. Of course there was boating, and fishing, and morning rides, and evening drives, and more than one expedition to places of interest, which were not hard to find in that neighborhood.

They were in the full tide of summer gayety, sometimes resolving themselves into a committee of the whole for the better prosecution of some scheme of merry-making; at other times dividing up into separate parties, as each felt inclined to pursue his or her own system of pleasure-seeking; but always meeting at dinner in the cool and well-lit dining-hall, and afterward spending the evening together, with music, dancing, games or flirtations upon the wide piazza, or along the moonlit walks, which intersected the grounds in all directions.

It was not monotonous at all, this round of pleasure-seeking, for there was such infinite variety in the methods employed *pour passer le temps*, that no one could weary of them, or do more than guess at the form which the diversions would assume upon the morrow.

There was an interruption, however, one evening, and that with a vengeance. The railcars ran at no great distance from the house, and a whole train had come to grief in consequence of a misplaced switch; and there was hurrying to and fro and consternation wild in Miss Montmorenci's household when the fact became known.

Miss Laura Vainstart fainted quite away in her sympathy for the sufferers. Three or four of the others were thrown into hysterics and were obliged to be put to bed, and treated to a course of sal volatile and aromatic vinegar.

Mrs. Dunston, Rose Summers and Miss Montmorenci proved themselves equal to the occasion, and flew across the grounds in the direction of the accident. The men had all gone to the rescue at the first note of alarm, and when Miss Montmorenci and her friends came up they found a wild scene of confusion and horror. The train—a portion of it at least—had been thrown down an embankment, and partly into the river. Part of the wreck was in flames, and the lurid light threw a ghastly glare over the scene, which was rendered still more dreadful by the groans and shrieks of the wounded.

It was certainly trying to one's nerves, but the little band of heroic rescuers worked with a will; and their efforts, added to those of the unharmed passengers, brought relief to many a pain-racked sufferer. A surgeon and his assistants were on the ground almost as soon as the telegram, sent to the nearest town, could reach them. The motionless figures, from which, alas! came no longer any sigh or sound of grief, because the spirit had already rent its prison-house and departed, were one by one transported to the unharmed coaches, followed by the wounded, who were anxious to be sent to friends or families, and then the train started.

Five minutes after its departure Miss Montmorenci discovered the figure of a man lying in the grass. He had evidently crawled away from the scene of the disaster, and had fainted from his hurt and exhaustion. A broken leg, a fractured arm, and how many other internal injuries the surgeon could hardly determine.

Sending on in order to have the duenna prepared for his reception, Miss Montmorenci gave orders to have the unconscious figure carried to the house. Slowly, and with the light of a few torches, the little procession moved off.

The report of the surgeon, after the broken limbs had been attended to, was somewhat more hopeful than had been anticipated. The man had recovered consciousness while his hurts were undergoing treatment, and had declared himself uninjured, save for the broken limbs. An opiate had been administered, and he was now sleeping. Miss Montmorenci might retire with the conviction that all had been done that the necessities of the case demanded, or that medical skill had judged expedient.

Miss Montmorenci, however, seemed restless, and unable to profit by the advice of the good physician. She did not retire, and she did pace the long piazza back and forth long after every other eye was closed in slumber. Something seemed to have disturbed the usual calm placidity of her nature. Her manner was abrupt, and there was a nervousness about her step that had seemed quite foreign to her temperament. Whether she slept at all that night or not, she quitted her room at an unusually early hour the next morning, and sent the duenna the first thing to inquire how the sick man had passed the night.

Thorpe and Masterson, who had constituted what they were pleased to term the hospital corps of the previous night, gave rather a discouraging report. The patient had been restless, and there was an appearance of fever which boded no good. The doctor came again and applied his remedies, shook his wise head, looked as if he might say a good deal if he chose, but only recommended careful nursing, and promised to come again in the evening.

And so for several days the tide of gayety received a check at the thought of the suffering brought so near, but in the progress of events the tender care of which he was the recipient, combined with the strength of an excellent constitution, brought the patient around to that point from whence a recovery might with safety be predicted, though the fever had left him miserably weak. Through his days and nights of semi-consciousness, he had seemed to have had strange dreams of a pale face bending over him, of soft gray eyes looking their sympathy from beneath a cloud of bright blonde hair, of a cool hand lain upon his throbbing brow. Whether these visions were the outcroppings of a fevered imagination, or whether a real presence had glided in and hovered about his sick bed, he could not tell; all was uncertain and vague, but that the recollection of these things had made a great impression upon him was evident from the way he brooded over them, turning them over and over in his mind, trying vainly to reconstruct, out of his own broken fancies, the beautiful apparition which had troubled his dreams.

When at length he was able to rise from his bed, and, with the assistance of a crutch and the aid of a friendly arm, could get out upon the piazza, he became the center of attraction, holding a daily sort of reception, at which all the guests of the house assisted, from Mrs. Dunston, who was in haste to inaugurate a fresh flirtation, down to Thorpe, who began to study the face of the convalescent in every possible light, with a view to prospective sittings when he should have commenced the great historical piece which was then seething in his brain.

Mr. Layton, for that was the stranger's name, was admirably fitted for playing the part of Grand Lama to this little crowd of admiring worshipers, having been endowed by nature with a knightly bearing, and an exterior of more than ordinary attractiveness. He had, it appeared, been a great traveler. For years he had not set foot on his native soil. India, China, Japan were to him familiar regions; England, France, Italy—he knew them all better than he comprehended the astonishing changes that had taken place in the Great Republic since he became a wanderer.

Nobody noticed that Miss Montmorenci was invariably absent from these little gatherings, but so it was. As Mr. Layton's recovery progressed, the mistress of the mansion withdrew herself more and more from her guests, yet with so much tact that, knowing her reputation for eccentricity, no remarks were made, no observation elicited. Every one supposed that Layton had seen his hostess scores of times, when the fact was he had not met her—at least, not consciously—had not even heard her name, and had no idea to whose hospitality he was indebted.

And all this while the summer was passing, the first frosts had come, and the mountains were one blaze of vivid coloring, the like of which not all Thorpe's attempts could transfer to canvas. The mornings grew too chilly for croquet, the frosty evening air put an end to out-of-door rambling, and there began to be a quick undercurrent of preparation for breaking up the party and returning to town.

Layton, now promoted to a cane in place of the discarded crutch, declared his intention of spending the coming season in New York.

"By the way," cried Thorpe, "let's have the question settled here and now. Where's Miss Montmorenci? Go and fetch her, some of you. We want to know when she proposes to break up this establishment, so that we can all go back together. That's the proper thing to do."

But Miss Montmorenci was not to be found, though every room was carefully searched. Celine, the maid, inclined to the belief that mademoiselle disported herself in the grounds, was, in fact, taking her usual after-dinner constitutional; a truth which was borne out by the fact that later in the evening Miss Montmorenci made her appearance, stepping through the low French window which opened upon the piazza, her blue silk dinner-dress gleaming through the folds of a fleecy white mantle which fell from her shoulders. She was gracious and easy as usual, but so coldly calm, and in her eyes was the look of one who had made up her mind to the inevitable.

Layton was surrounded by a little group, and did not notice the new arrival until his attention was aroused to the fact that there was much animated chat going on in another part of the room. Turning his head, he saw Miss Montmorenci gracefully poised in the center of a little circle of her guests. The sight seemed to fascinate him; his gaze remained riveted upon her face, his ears drank in the clear tones of her voice as she replied to the eager questioning of her friends, declaring herself ready to go back to town whenever it should suit their pleasure or convenience to flit thitherward.

"Sorry to break up this pleasant party," said Thorpe, sauntering back to Layton's side. "Miss Montmorenci is a model of a hostess, and we've enjoyed the summer mightily. Glad you're going with us, my boy. What! you are not going to retire at this early hour?"

But Layton slipped away, and was seen no more in the parlors that evening.

Miss Montmorenci was given to roaming about at unheard-of hours, and that night she seemed more restless than common, excusing Celine from her usual attendance, and commencing an endless walk up and down her room. When she had reason to suppose every eye but her own was closed in slumber, she came out upon the piazza and there continued her ceaseless march. At times the air seemed to stifle her, and she threw back her light mantle; again she shivered as with an ague, and, wrapping herself in the warm white folds, she clenched her hands fiercely and quickened her pace.

Presently there were footsteps on the gravel; a man's form emerged from the shrubbery and advanced toward the house. With his foot upon the lowest steps he paused. The moonlight fell about him—a tall figure resting upon a cane.

Miss Montmorenci heard the advancing tread, turned swiftly and stood above, facing him haughtily, and on her guard.

The man gazed an instant, then impulsively stretched out his arms.

"Edith! O Edith, is it you?"

The answer came distinct enough.

"Yes, it is I!"

His hands dropped mutely; he rested heavily upon his cane.

"I did not know until to-night to whom I was indebted for the hospitality of the past weeks. The circumstances that have thrown us together once more have been beyond human control. I will go away now, and never again intrude upon you. O Edith, Edith!"

The agony of the tone seemed to pierce her. She drew a step nearer.

"Have you forgotten all the past?" he went on; "the years in which we were all in all to each other? Have you forgotten how, on this very spot, we planned our life together? You were not cold and proud then, Edith. I do believe you loved me then. Say you did; tell me it was not all a dream!"

"How dare you recall those days?" she asked, fiercely. "I was a fool then, for I belived in you, and you—you never loved me!" He recoiled as if from a blow.

"Good God!" he cried; "how can you say that? Not love you? What has made me a wanderer upon the face of the earth since the day upon which I received that letter containing your cruel dismissal? What has made me a stranger in my own land? What drew me back after years of exile, thinking to gaze once more upon the scenes among which my dream of happiness culminated and faded? Not love you? And you stand there and say that!"

Miss Montmorenci put up her hand uncertainly.

"There is some mistake here. The letter to which you allude—I never wrote it. I made no reply to your note asking to be released from your engagement, for I was ill at the time, and when I recovered you had left the country."

He ran up the steps quickly, spite of his lameness.

"Edith," he cried, "I never wrote you such a request! Your own act—or what I supposed to be such—separated us. Good heavens, if there should prove to have been foul play! If all these years we have suffered needlessly—for I have suffered, Edith, horribly, unspeakably. I loved you so madly, so absorbingly!"

Miss Montmorenci did not retreat from him, though she still stood expectantly, as if waiting to hear more.

"I have the letter yet in which, as I thought, you made the heartless proposal that our engagement should be canceled. I made what protests I could, wrote you letter after letter, only to have them returned unopened. When I could do no more I left the country, and for ten years I have tried to forget you. Unsuccessful in that I came back, not knowing whether you were dead or alive, but drawn irresistibly toward your old home, wishing once more to look upon the place where my happiest days were passed, and then intending to go away forever. I could not have believed you still lived here, but an accident threw me upon your hands and we meet once more. Edith, tell me now truly, as you would speak to one whom you may never meet again on earth, did you *ever* love me?"

"Claud," she cried, "I have *always* loved you!" And then she glided into his outstretched arms, and he clasped her rapturously to his breast.

Thrilling and trembling with rapture she clung to him, feeling only that he was her's at last. They had waited so long, these lovers. Year after year happiness had flown from them, and coldness, and distrust, and worldliness had gathered thick about their hearts; but now the barriers were removed, and the love which each had cherished in secret was allowed to appear.

Miss Montmorenci's friends would not have recognized in her the cold and unapproachable heiress who had for so many years dazzled them by her beauty, and at the same time shocked them with her lack of anything approaching womanly tenderness.

There was much to tell; much that neither could explain. That some enemy had effected their separation was plain enough, but to whom to attribute the foul play, it was, at this late day, impossible to determine. They were together at last, and that fact rendered their happiness so complete as to cause the bitter past to sink into insignificance. Both had suffered, and to both the joy of this hour came like a foretaste of heaven.

THE OLD MAN IN THE PALACE CAR.

BY JOHN H. YATES.—SKETCHES BY O. J. HOPKINS.

Well, Betsey, this beats everything our eyes have ever seen!
We're ridin' in a palace fit for any king or queen.
We didn't go as fast as this, nor on such cushions rest,
When we left New England years ago to seek a home out West.

We rode through this same country, but not as we now ride—
You sat within a stage coach, while I trudged by your side;
Instead of ridin' on a rail, I *carried one*, you know,
To pry the old coach from the mire through which we had to go.

Let's see: that's fifty years ago—just arter we were wed;
Your eyes were then like diamonds bright, your cheeks like roses red.
Now, Betsey, people call us old, and push us off one side,
Just as they have the old slow coach in which we used to ride.

I wonder if young married folks to-day would condescend
To take a weddin'-tour like ours, with a log-house at the end?
Much of the sentimental love that sets young cheeks aglow
Would die to meet the hardships of fifty years ago.

Our love grew stronger as we toiled; though food and clothes were coarse,
None ever saw us in the courts a-huntin' a divorce;
Love leveled down the mountains and made low places high;
Love sang a song to cheer us when cloude and storms were nigh.

I'm glad to see the world move on, to hear the engine's roar,
And all about the cables stretchin' now from shore to shore.
Our mission is accomplished; with toil we both are through;
The Lord just lets us live awhile to see how young folks do.

Whew, Betsey, how we're flyin'! See the farms and towns go by!
It makes my gray hair stand on end; it dims my failing eye.
Soon we'll be through our journey, and in the house so good
That stands within a dozen rods of where the log one stood.

How slow—like old-time coaches—our youthful years went by!—
The years when we were livin' 'neath a bright New England sky:
Swifter than palace cars now fly our later years have flown,
Till now we journey hand in hand down to the grave alone.

I can hear the whistle blowin' on life's fast-flyin' train;
Only a few more stations in the valley now remain.
Soon we'll reach the home eternal, with its glories all untold,
And stop at the best station in the city built of gold.

A Novel Revenge.

A curious action is about to be tried at Allahabad by Mr. Rawlins, the district sub-judge. A young man of "gentlemanly exterior"—as the penny-a-liners say—is the defendant in the case, and the allegations leveled at his head are of an almost unprecedented character. It is affirmed that this ingenious, rather than ingenuous, youth did a short time since craftily approach a married lady resident at Allahabad, and with malicious grace offer for her acceptance a rose of surpassing beauty. The unsuspecting lady was graciously pleased to take the flower, and to apply it to the tip of her aristocratic nose. No sooner had she done so, however, than—horror of horrors!—her fine features became convulsed with all the sad preliminaries of a sneeze. She sneezed; she sneezed again; she continued to sneeze, until her heart and flesh failed under the exhausting process, and she became seriously ill, so ill, indeed, that the constant attendance of two or three medical men was for a time rendered necessary. When the rose, the exciting cause of all this sternutatory complication, came to be examined, Cayenne pepper in rich abundance was discovered between its petals, and the plaintiff's case is that this apparent botanical eccentricity on the part of the flower is really attributable to the defendant's malice. The exasperated husband claims some 700 rupees as damages for expenses incurred in the shape of medical treatment and change of air for his luckless spouse; and the hearing of the case is looked forward to with some interest by the residents of Allahabad. If the above allegations are correct it is to be hoped that the defendant will, in his turn, get well peppered—in a legal sense, and learn that, though "a rose by any other name would smell as sweet," a rose *a la* Cayenne pepper is not to be sneezed at with impunity.